

# Exhibit 13

# MAURITANIA 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mauritania is an Islamic Republic with a president as head of state and a constitution grounded in French civil law and sharia. The National Assembly exercises legislative functions but was weak relative to the executive. Voters elect the president, deputies to the National Assembly, municipal mayors, and regional councilors. In 2019 voters elected former minister of defense Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani as president with 52 percent of the vote. The election marked the first democratic transition of power between two elected presidents since the country's independence in 1960. United Nations and African Union observers considered the election to be relatively free and fair. In the 2018 parliamentary elections, the Union for the Republic, the political party founded by former president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, won 95 of 157 seats in the National Assembly.

The National Police, which is responsible for enforcing the law and maintaining order in urban areas, reports to the Ministry of Interior. The National Guard performs a limited police function in keeping with its peacetime role as the guarantor of physical security at government facilities, including prisons. The National Guard reports to the Ministry of the Interior. Regional authorities may call upon the National Guard to restore civil order during riots and other large-scale disturbances. The gendarmerie, a specialized paramilitary organization under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, is responsible for maintaining civil order around metropolitan areas and providing law enforcement services in rural areas. The Ministry of Interior's General Group for Road Safety maintains security on roads and operates checkpoints throughout the country. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces. There were credible reports that members of the security forces committed some abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests; serious restrictions on free expression and media, including criminal blasphemy laws; serious government corruption; lack of investigation and accountability for gender-based violence;

trafficking in persons, including continued existence of slavery and slavery-related practices; crimes involving violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons; existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults; and existence of some of the worst forms of child labor.

The government took steps to identify, investigate, and punish officials who committed abuses and prosecuted some abusers, but some officials frequently acted with impunity. Civil society organizations objected to the scant number of indictments handed down by authorities. The government also continued to take steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials involved in corruption.

## **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person**

### **a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings**

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

### **b. Disappearance**

There were no reports of disappearances by, or on behalf of, government authorities.

### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

According to the Conduct in UN Field Missions online portal, there were two allegations submitted in 2020 of sexual exploitation and abuse by the country's peacekeepers deployed to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. Both cases involved transactional sex with an adult, and as of October, investigations into both remained pending.

personal status code provides a framework for the consistent application of secular law and sharia-based family law, but judicial officials did not always respect it. There are legal restrictions on women's employment, including limitations on working in occupations deemed dangerous and certain industries including mining and construction.

## **Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination**

The law provides that all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity, are equal. Nevertheless, Haratines (the “Black Moors” and former slave caste) and sub-Saharanans often faced discrimination from the country's Beydane community. Police often tolerated discrimination towards the Haratines and sub-Saharanans since the security services were largely controlled by Beydane.

Haratine and sub-Saharan ethnic groups faced governmental discrimination while the Beydane ethnic group received governmental preference. For example, individuals living across the border in Western Sahara (who are of Beydane ethnicity) easily obtained national identity cards required to vote, although they were not legally qualified to do so because they were not citizens. Meanwhile, Haratine (Arab slave descendants) and sub-Saharan (non-Arab) citizens often had great difficulty obtaining national identity documents.

Racial and cultural tension and discrimination also arose from the geographic, linguistic, and cultural divides between Moors (Beydane and Haratine) – who while historically representing a mix of Berber, Arab, and sub-Saharan Africans, today largely identify culturally and linguistically as Arab – and the sub-Saharan non-Arab minorities. Historically, the Beydane (“White Moors”) enslaved the Haratine population (“Black Moors”); some hereditary slavery continued, and Haratines continued to suffer from the legacy of centuries of slavery (see section 7.b.). Beydane tribes and clans dominated positions in government and business far beyond their proportion of the population. As a group, the Haratines remained politically and economically weaker than the Beydane, although they represented the largest ethnocultural group in the country. The various sub-Saharan ethnic groups, along with the Haratines, remained underrepresented in leadership positions in government, industry, and the military (see section 3). President Ghazouani increased the number of Haratines and sub-Saharanans in leadership

positions, most notably by appointing a Haratine as prime minister.

From June through September, the Union for the Republic, the country's ruling political party, held a series of workshops and debates throughout the country to address the issue of national cohesion and slavery. The workshops marked the first time that the ruling party began to openly discuss ways to overcome some of the country's racial and cultural tensions.

The government took steps to mitigate the economic factors that contributed to the problem. For example, the General Delegation for National Solidarity and the Fight against Exclusion, or Taazour, was created in 2019 to intensify government efforts to combat slavery and address the social and economic conditions that left many citizens vulnerable to forced labor. With a budget of 20 billion ouguiyas (\$541 million) through 2024, Taazour was implementing projects to improve living conditions and provide skills to members of historically marginalized communities. The institution had the authority to coordinate projects of other government agencies in order to maximize their impact. Taazour had an agreement with the CNDH to facilitate efforts by beneficiaries of Taazour projects to seek redress for any abuse of their civil rights.

## Children

**Birth Registration:** By law a person derives citizenship from one's father. One can derive citizenship from one's mother under either of the following conditions: if the mother is a citizen and the father's nationality is unknown or he is stateless, or if the child was born in the country to a citizen mother and the child repudiates the father's nationality a year before reaching majority. Children born abroad to citizen mothers and foreign men can acquire citizenship one year before reaching the majority age of 18. Minor children of parents who are naturalized citizens are also eligible for citizenship.

The process of registering a child and subsequently receiving a birth certificate was reportedly difficult. Failure to register could result in denial of some public services, such as education.

**Education:** The law mandates six years of school attendance for all children, but the law was not effectively enforced. Many children, particularly girls, did not

attend school for the mandatory six years. Children of lower castes from both Haratine and sub-Saharan families often did not receive any formal education.

**Child Abuse:** There are laws against child abuse, although authorities rarely applied them. Authorities also rarely investigated allegations of child abuse in homes or schools.

**Child, Early, and Forced Marriage:** The legal marriage age is 18, but authorities rarely enforced the law, and child marriage was widespread. Since consensual sex outside of marriage is illegal, a legal guardian can ask local authorities to permit a girl younger than 18 to marry. Local authorities frequently granted permission. The government continued to work with UNICEF to implement a program to combat child marriage through a series of judicial and political reforms.

In 2017, according to UNICEF, 37 percent of girls were married before the age of 18, and 18 percent were married before the age of 15.

**Sexual Exploitation of Children:** The law prohibits sexual relations with a child younger than 18, with penalties of six months to two years in prison and a fine. Possession of child pornography is illegal, with penalties of two months to one year in prison and a fine. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is illegal. NGOs asserted the laws were not properly enforced.

**Displaced Children:** According to a 2019 statement by the minister of social affairs, there were more than 16,000 children who needed protection, including displaced children.

**International Child Abductions:** The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

## Anti-Semitism

A very small number of foreign residents practiced Judaism. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.